



# **NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL**

**MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA**

## **THESIS**

**FROM INDEPENDENCE TO ALLIANCE: NATO IMPACT  
ON LATVIAN SECURITY ENVIRONMENT IN THE POST  
COLD WAR ERA**

by

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December 2004

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<b>REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE</b>			Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instruction, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188) Washington DC 20503.				
<b>1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank)</b>		<b>2. REPORT DATE</b> December 2004	<b>3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED</b> Master's Thesis	
<b>4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE:</b> From Independence to Alliance: NATO impact on Latvian Security Environment in the Post Cold War Era			<b>5. FUNDING NUMBERS</b>	
<b>6. AUTHOR(S)</b> Lokmanis, Arnis				
<b>7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)</b> Naval Postgraduate School Monterey, CA 93943-5000			<b>8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER</b>	
<b>9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)</b> N/A			<b>10. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER</b>	
<b>11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES</b> The views expressed in this report are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. Government.				
<b>12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT</b> Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited			<b>12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE</b>	
<b>13. ABSTRACT (maximum 200 words)</b> <p>The collapse of the Soviet Union, and the associated end of global confrontation, has resulted in a dynamic process of changes, which has transformed the entire security situation in the Baltic Sea region.</p> <p>In recognition that NATO is becoming an organization able to extend stability and security throughout all of Europe, Latvia has considered membership into NATO a key to the solution of the Baltic security dilemma.</p> <p>This thesis examines the influence of NATO institutions on the Latvian security environment, in advance of Latvia's full-fledged membership into NATO. The analysis is particularly concerned with the gradual growth of various NATO cooperative institutions by which NATO will extend its influence in the strengthening of security and stability in the Baltic Sea region.</p> <p>The analysis concludes that NATO's involvement with Latvia has had multiple positive effects, including increased security, transformation of armed forces, and creation of a new framework in Latvian-Russian relations.</p>				
<b>14. SUBJECT TERMS</b> Latvia, NATO, Latvian National Armed Forces			<b>15. NUMBER OF PAGES</b> 75	
			<b>16. PRICE CODE</b>	
<b>17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT</b> Unclassified	<b>18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE</b> Unclassified	<b>19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT</b> Unclassified	<b>20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT</b> UL	

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SECURITY ENVIRONMENT IN THE POST COLD WAR ERA**

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS**

from the

**NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL  
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## **ABSTRACT**

The collapse of the Soviet Union, and the associated end of global confrontation, has resulted in a dynamic process of changes, which has transformed the entire security situation in the Baltic Sea region.

In recognition that NATO is becoming an organization able to extend stability and security throughout all of Europe, Latvia has considered membership into NATO a key to the solution of the Baltic security dilemma.

This thesis examines the influence of NATO institutions on the Latvian security environment, in advance of Latvia's full-fledged membership into NATO. The analysis is particularly concerned with the gradual growth of various NATO cooperative institutions by which NATO will extend its influence in the strengthening of security and stability in the Baltic Sea region.

The analysis concludes that NATO's involvement with Latvia has had multiple positive effects, including increased security, transformation of armed forces, and creation of a new framework in Latvian-Russian relations.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ANP	Annual National Program
BALTBAT	Baltic Battalion
BALTCCIS	Baltic Information System
BALTDEFCOL	Baltic Defense College
BALTDISLEARN	Baltic Education Program
BALTLOG	Baltic Logistics System
BALTMED	Baltic Medical Unit
BALTNET	Baltic Air Surveillance Network
BALTRON	Baltic Naval Squadron
BCM	Baltic Council of Ministers
CBSS	Council of the Baltic Sea States
CE	Council of Europe
CEE	Central Eastern Europe
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CJTF	Combined Joint Task Force
CSCE	Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe
DCI	Defense Capabilities Initiative
DF	Defense Forces
EAPC	Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council
EU	European Union
EUFOR	EU Military Operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina
FMF	Foreign Military Financing Program
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HG	Home Guard
IFOR	Implementation Force
IMET	International Military Education and Training Program
IO	Interoperability Objectives
IPP	Individual Partnership Program
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
KFOR	Kosovo Force
KVM	Kosovo Verification Mission
LATBAT	1st Infantry Battalion
LNAF	Latvian National Armed Forces
MAP	Membership Action Plan
MC	Military Committee
MCWG	Military Cooperation Working Group
MOD	Ministry of Defense of Latvia
NAC	North Atlantic Council
NACC	North Atlantic Cooperation Council
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NBC	Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Defense Unit

OCC	Operational Capabilities Concept
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
OIF	Operation Iraqi Freedom
PARP	Planning and Review Process

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

Completing a M.A. is truly a challenge, and I would not have been able to complete this without the aid and support of countless people over the past eighteen months. I must first express my gratitude towards the Latvian Ministry of Defense and US embassy in Latvia, which gave me the opportunity to pursue a postgraduate degree here at the Naval Postgraduate School.

I would like to thank also both my advisors, Professor Mikhail Tsypkin and Colonel Hans-Eberhard Peters. Their leadership, support, and attention to detail have set an example I hope to match some day

Finally, I would like to thank my wife, whose help during the thesis writing period fostered increased harmony in our household.

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# **I. INTRODUCTION**

## **A. BACKGROUND**

For fifty years, the Baltic Sea served as a barrier between the East and the West of Europe. After the collapse of the USSR and with the regaining of independence at the beginning of the nineties, all new eastern European democracies were deeply concerned with the development of national security. At the same time, European security institutions were also undergoing significant changes and the Warsaw pact was dissolved, but NATO unquestionably remained the strongest collective security framework of Western Europe.

Despite this recognition, there continues to be a great amount of controversy surrounding NATO enlargement and its implications for new and acceding member states, a controversy that dates back to NATO's first eastern enlargement in 1999.

This research is motivated by the lack of a comprehensive analysis of NATO institutional influence on Latvia and its security environment. The public opinion and literature on NATO membership is mostly formed by journalists and politicians, whose focus is on gaining political momentum, swaying public opinion, and making electoral gains, rather than on objective analysis or reporting of fact.

This thesis will analyze the dynamics of Latvia's integration process into NATO, since joining the Alliance in April 2004, and examine the effects NATO had on Latvia's security environment prior to gaining full-fledged membership. The analysis will point out the mechanisms by which NATO extends its institutional influence and specifically, its contribution to the strengthening of security and stability in the Baltic Sea region.

## **B. OBJECTIVES**

By tracing the Latvian NATO membership process, this thesis will show how the institutional and normative adjustments induced by NATO cooperative security arrangements impact on the regional security environment and democratic development of politico-military structures.

## **C. THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

This thesis seeks to answer one main question and three sub-questions.

The main question is, “What affects has NATO had on Latvia’s security environment in advance of its full- fledged membership?”

The sub-questions are:

- “What is NATO’s influence on Latvian security policy?”
- “What is NATO’s impact on the development of Latvian National Armed Forces?”
- “What is NATO’s impact on Latvian-Russian relations?”

## **D. METHODOLOGY**

In order to meet the stated objective of this thesis and to adequately address the questions posed in the previous section, the process tracing method was used for analysis. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, membership in EU and NATO became a primary strategic goal of Latvia’s foreign policy. How did NATO instruments influence Latvia’s institutions and policies? This thesis will be an analysis of a single case- Latvia’s integration process into NATO, it will examine its experience. It will use a “process tracing” method. The independent variable is NATO. The thesis analyzes how NATO through its varied instruments (NACC, PfP, EAPC, MAP) impacts the dependent variable, Latvian security. By examining NATO influence on all three intervening variables (Latvian security policy, development of Latvian National Armed Forces, and Latvian- Russian relations) over time, it should be possible to determine how each of them impacts Latvia’s security environment. Seeing that integrating into NATO is one of many factors, which impact Latvia’s stability and security, this thesis does not seek comprehensive causal explanation. Thesis methodology is based on the research, study and analysis of the historical background, through examination of Latvia’s and NATO strategic documents.

The thesis is based on primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include NATO documents and publications, Latvian government documents referring to NATO enlargement process. Secondary sources include works by political and military analysts,

electronic journals, and other materials. Each chapter will chronologically observe organizations and events that are relevant to the research subject. The final chapter will show the effects of NATO machinery on Latvia's institutions and policies.

## **E. ORGANIZATION OF STUDY**

To explore and meet the main objectives, the thesis is organized into an introductory chapter, four main chapters, and a conclusion. Consequently, it starts with an overview of Latvia's security options after regaining independence in 1991 then follows with a brief review of the historical and cultural preconditions that helped to identify the Baltic States region as a specific object of analysis in order to comprehend the link between security conceptions and security policy options of the Republic of Latvia. The arguments for NATO membership will be presented based on potential risks to its regained independence in 1991.

Chapter II will focus on chronological description of the incremental growth of NATO involvement and its various instruments through which it is fostering cooperation with aspirant countries. The role of the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC), the Partnership for Peace (PFP), the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC), and The Membership Action Plan (MAP) will be assessed. In this chapter the research tries to describe how an international institution exercises its influence on domestic actor.

When Latvia regained its independence in 1991, it had no armed forces, which had to be established in order to ensure national security, to cooperate with the other two Baltic States for regional security, and to prepare for NATO membership. This chapter looks at how NATO's requirements promote the gradual growth of Latvia's military capabilities. It will analyze LNAF interaction with NATO and its preparation process to be on readiness standby to NATO, i.e., Membership Action Plan- (MAP). It concludes with an overall assessment of NATO impact on the transformation of LNAF.

Chapter V is devoted to Latvian-Russian relations, because of its uniqueness in the post- communist world. By getting closer to the fulfilling of its foreign policy priorities- joining NATO and EU, Latvia is leaving the so-called "post-communist space" that certainly has a strong effect to the Latvian-Russian relations.

By looking at the general development in relations among these countries, I will analyze Russia's Baltic policy, which is based on the three main elements: the economic, military and ethnic questions.

In conclusion I will summarize all those acquired positive effects of NATO involvement. Additionally, I will assess what has been done right and what should be done in a different way for NATO's next round of enlargement. The thesis concludes that NATO involvement was a crucial element to Latvia's developing into a stable, democratic, secure, and predictable country.

## II. LATVIA'S SECURITY POLICY OPTIONS

Historically, Latvia became an independent state after the First World War. But unlike other countries in its region, (with the exception of Estonia and Lithuania) which regained their independence after a few years of occupation during the Second World War, Latvia found itself forcefully included in the Soviet Union. This occupation, for almost five decades, left serious demographic, economic, and psychological legacies, whose burdens will be borne by the inhabitants of Latvia for the foreseeable future. In spite of these burdens, however, Latvia has made significant progress toward full political and market reform, as evidenced by its recent inclusion (May 2004) as a full member of both the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

After the restoration of its independence in 1991, Latvia, as well as Estonia and Lithuania, were left in a security vacuum. Latvia's security problems were attributed to its proximity to Russia, a possible source of external instability: "Quite unlike earlier times, Balts faced no military threat from the west or the south. The only perceptible danger came from the east -- from Russia."<sup>1</sup>

According to Russia's foreign and security policy, efforts were being made at preserving some influence over the Baltic States; and they were characteristically referred to as the zone of Russia's special interests.<sup>2</sup> Russia's strategy was aimed at ensuring that the Baltic States remained in a state of unknowing, about their future existence, and that a security and military vacuum be present in the three country's so that, if necessary, Russia could use them to satisfy its own political goals - increasing influence on the region or, in the end, filling the aforementioned vacuum."<sup>3</sup>

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1 Walter C. Clemens jr., *The Baltic transformed, Complexity Theory and European Security*, Rowman & Littlefield publishers, 2001, p.179

2 J. Dreifelds, *Latvia in Transition*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 30

3 Paul Goble, *Line that still divides Europe*, RFE/RL News line.  
<http://ukrweekly.com/Archive/1999/359904.shtml>. Accessed 12 November 2004.

As a result, the best security option for Latvia was to achieve closer relations with the West and involvement in international and European organizations. These organizations were seen as a counterbalance to Russia's influence in the Baltic region.

Since 1949, the NATO was not only able to master the challenges of the Cold War, while it lasted, but has also proven its common political will and willingness to use military options in ensuring the security and freedom of its members. The possibility of military threat directed at Latvia has made NATO the primary goal of Latvian security policy. This point stresses the purpose of this chapter, addressing the question: “Why did Latvia strive for NATO membership?”

In order answer this question, it is necessary to present an overview of Latvia's alternative security options, pertaining to the time after regaining independence in 1991. A brief review of the historical and cultural preconditions will help in comprehending these security policy options. In terms of political and military security arrangements, these options include:

- neutrality
- regional security arrangements -- an alliance of two or several small states
- western option -- membership in a multilateral alliance centered around one or more major powers
- bilateral alliance with a major power in the region<sup>4</sup>

#### **A. NEUTRALITY**

Given the painful experience in the two World Wars, when the country played the role of a battleground for the competing interests of the big powers, and fifty years under Soviet occupation, Latvia regained independence in 1991 and started the process of formulating its security policy. The bottom line of Latvia's security concerns was the maintenance of its territorial integrity and political autonomy.

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<sup>4</sup> H. Wiberg, *Security Problems of Small Nations*, Werner Bauwens, Armand Clesse and Olav F. Knudsen (eds.), *Small States and the Security Challenge in the New Europe*, London, Brassey's, 1996, p. 36

The Baltic States belong to the, politically identifiable, Baltic Sea region, where Russia had been the major power for several centuries. Except for Russia, all other countries in the region are either NATO members or members of EU. After the Cold War, the Baltic States became three small elements in a situation whereby one pole had collapsed and the other- as represented by the core element of NATO and the European Communities- had become comparatively stronger.<sup>5</sup> This explains why, in security and policy debates, the option of developing a bilateral alliance with a major power of the region, namely Russia, had been discarded. However, in 1997 Russia did offer security guarantees to Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia if they stayed out of the Western military alliance. This proposal was rejected by the three Baltic countries, which still perceived Russia as a potential threat. In the words of Valdis Birkavs, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Latvia:

Again this week, we have had a new round of suggestions from the Russian side about security guarantees that they apparently want to offer each Baltic State, free of charge. I find myself having to repeat that Latvia does not require security guarantees from Russia; such offers cannot help but remind us of other guarantees, of the secret protocols of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact in 1939. This security pact led to our incorporation into the Soviet Union. ...such offers or deals are a violation of the principle of indivisibility of European security. Indivisibility and the right to choose one's own measures of security and one's own defense arrangements are axioms of the new European security architecture and Latvia is going to stick to them. ...we want to be good neighbors and we are looking for good neighborliness from Russia. The long term habit of being a good neighbor is better security than a guarantee with a date and signature. We need habits of co-operation not promises of co-operation.<sup>6</sup>

Although it was never officially adopted, it was quite natural that neutrality as a security policy option was popular at the time of the liberation movements and immediately after the restoration of independence. First of all, in the 1930s, all of the Baltic States adopted a policy of neutrality, so it was a familiar policy option. Secondly,

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5 Mark Kramer, NATO, the Baltic States and Russia, A Framework for Enlargement, Harvard University, February 2002, [www.csis.org/ruseura/ponars/workingpapers/019.PDF](http://www.csis.org/ruseura/ponars/workingpapers/019.PDF). Accessed 12 November 2004.

6 The address of Valdis Birkavs at Second Annual Stockholm Conference on Baltic Sea Security and Cooperation- Towards an Inclusive Security Structure in the Baltic Sea Region, 1997, <http://stockholm.usembassy.gov/bsconf/toc.html>. Accessed 12 November 2004.

in general, for the Baltic States, neutrality meant the continuity of foreign and security policies of the re-established states with those of the interwar states. Finally, the positive attitude towards neutrality was also encouraged by Russia's progress from 1991-92 towards a liberal state's identity.

But shortly after independence, as a result of the changing international situation, the idea of neutrality lost favor as the means of providing security. On January 18, 1994, Russian Foreign Minister Andrey Kozyrev explicitly claimed Russia's right to maintain troops in the Baltic States to avoid a security vacuum and to pre-empt the establishment of forces hostile to Russia.<sup>7</sup> Similar statements had been enunciated earlier by the Russian defense minister and other officials. In fact, Russia's continued military presence became a major bargaining chip for Russian internal politics and foreign policy. Many Latvians attributed the delay to the hope of some Russian military and political leaders that political changes might occur in Moscow and the *status quo ante* re-established. As stated Vaira Vike-Freiberga, the president of the Republic of Latvia:

At the moment, the Baltic Sea region is made up of a checkerboard of nations at different stages of development. ...thus, from the point of view of security and defense, Sweden and Finland's neutrality has served these countries well, for they have been able to build credible defense systems of their own. Latvia, in its current geopolitical position, cannot afford the luxury of being a neutral state.”<sup>8</sup>

The concept of permanent neutrality became a matter of discussion. Many argued that neutrality only exists if wars exist or are feasible. At least in Europe, however, this no longer seemed to be the case. Neutrality was an alternative to the allied status during the reign of the bipolar power structure. As traditionally conceptualized, neutrality has come to be seen largely irrelevant in the post-Cold era, unable to contend with the highly interdependent nature of the contemporary international system and the diffuse nature of the threats it harbors.<sup>9</sup> In the new unipolar Europe, with the EU as the pole, neutrality has

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7 Baltic prime ministers meeting in Jurmala overshadowed by Kozyrev's statement, MFA of the Republic of Estonia, [www.muhi.ee/E-LIST/1994/94\\_01/1994\\_01\\_20\\_18\\_21\\_01\\_0200-14k](http://www.muhi.ee/E-LIST/1994/94_01/1994_01_20_18_21_01_0200-14k). Accessed 18 November 2004.

8 The speech of Vaira Vike-Freiberga, President of the Republic of Latvia, Security Aspects of Integrating Latvia into Euro-Atlantic Structures, Folkets Hus, Stockholm, Sweden, 19 October 2000, <http://stockholm.usembassy.gov/bsconf/2000/freiberga.html>. Accessed 3 November 2004.

9 Berg, Writing Post-Soviet Estonia onto the World Map, Working Papers 3, Copenhagen, COPRI, 2000, p.15



changed its content. As a result, such traditionally neutral countries as Finland and Sweden joined the EU in 1995, and neutrality was replaced by membership in the EU and cooperation with NATO.

Another reason neutrality was dropped by Latvia as a security option stemmed from bitter history lessons learned from its neutrality experiences of the 1930s. Finally, neutrality was seen as an obstacle to the Baltic States' integration and alignment with the West in the future.<sup>10</sup>

By 1994, the idea of neutrality was finally discarded. This was influenced by the withdrawal of Russian troops from the Baltic States, by a more active NATO policy towards the CEE states, and ultimately by Russia's ideological struggles. After Duma elections in 1993, Russia's quest for a liberal state's identity was superseded by the ideology of "return to the empire."<sup>11</sup> The ideas of a Baltic security alliance and of integration with Western security structures soon became predominant in the Baltic States.

## **B. REGIONAL SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS: ALLIANCE OF THE BALTIC STATES**

After withdrawal of the Russian troops from Latvia in August 1994, a new phase in the development of Latvia's security policy was initiated. Since the idea of neutrality was finally discharged, cooperation between the Baltic States became a top priority of Latvia's foreign and security policy. In parallel to their preparations for accession to NATO and the EU, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania engaged in close security and defense cooperation. In this way, they were able to optimize their resources and capabilities and avoid costly and pointless duplication. The result of this cooperative environment was that, the Baltic States had gradually been absorbed into various arrangements for regional political, economic and security cooperation, including:

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<sup>10</sup> R. Herrmann, *Perceptions and Behavior in Soviet Foreign Policy*, Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press, 1985, p. 56

<sup>11</sup> G. Smith, V. Law, A. Wilson, A. Bohr and E. Allworth, *Nation-Building in the Post-Soviet Borderlands: The Politics of National Identities*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998, p.10

- The Baltic Assembly, set up in 1991, made up of 60 parliamentarians (20 per national delegation)
- The Nordic Council<sup>12</sup>
- The Council of the Baltic Sea States(CBSS), established in March 1992, made up of 11 countries<sup>13</sup> plus the European Commission
- The Baltic Council, set up in 1993, with a Council of Ministers and an Assembly
- The Baltic Council of Ministers (BCM), established by the Heads of Government of the Republic of Estonia, the Republic of Latvia and the Republic of Lithuania in 1994

In 1994, in Tallinn, the Baltic countries signed the Agreement on Baltic Parliamentary and Government Co-operation between Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.<sup>14</sup> This Agreement included all aforementioned frameworks for cooperation and was particularly important in securing continuous cooperation at the level of state executive power, as well as, implementing the aims and mutual interests of the Baltic States in the fields of foreign and security policy. Although this agreement did not have competence concerning defense matters, it did have an important role in security. The cooperation involved active political dialogue and practical cooperation in related spheres. Home affairs, justice, border controls, and civilian protection were all part of their remit and cooperation through them served to further bolster regional security.

Cooperation over security was established in 1992 by the Protocol of Agreement, among the Ministries of Defense of the Baltic States, on ensuring security cooperation, which provided for joint military exercises and unified control of air, sea, and land borders. Later in 1993, a trilateral declaration, regarding cooperation in the security and

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12 The Nordic Council was set up in 1952 by Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. The cooperation office in Riga was opened immediately after regaining independence in 1991

13 Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Russia and Sweden

14 Regional Baltic co-operation between Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania was formally established as early as 1934 with the signing the Treaty of Good Understanding and Co-operation between Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania in Geneva. In historians' view, this belated Treaty had no effect on the role of Baltic States in the security situation of the time

defense fields, was adopted, and a year later, the "Agreement between the Governments of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania concerning the Establishment and Formation of a Joint Peacekeeping Unit" was signed (13 September 1994). These were followed by the "Resolution concerning Military Cooperation among the Baltic States" (13 November 1994), the "Resolution on Defense Cooperation" (2 December 1995), and the "Resolution on the Common Policy of the Baltic States concerning NATO Membership" (6 October 1996).

At its inception in 1994, the three states sought to draw closer to NATO by joining the Partnership for Peace (PfP) programme. A group of Estonian politicians in August 1996 issued a joint statement calling for a Baltic Security Pact that would help maintain the security of the Baltic States until their admission in to NATO. According to data from the 'Baltijos tyrimai' (Baltic Survey) of January 1996, more than half of the population of the Baltic countries supported the creation of a military alliance comprised of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia; the percentage of those surveyed in favor of this alliance in Lithuania was 69%, in Latvia 67%, and in Estonia 64%.<sup>15</sup> However, this idea did not receive sufficient support by the political elites of the Baltic States; Lithuania was particularly reserved about the idea. As a result, there is currently no effort in pursuit of this goal.

In retrospect, the whole idea of a Baltic Security Pact can be seen as an attempt to "remake" history by restoring the failed interwar defense alliance of the Baltic States. Nevertheless, it was a "clear" response to both Russia's opposition to the Baltic States' membership in NATO and Western reservation and skepticism concerning this membership.

### **C. THE WESTERN OPTION**

After 50 years of interruption, the Baltic dimension returned to European security politics. It was a historic opportunity to close one chapter in world history, and open a new one based on international engagement, cooperation, and common values.

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<sup>15</sup> Grazina Miniotaite, *The Security Policy of Lithuania and the Integration Dilemma*, Lithuanian Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, 1999, p. 31

After restoration of its independence, Latvia has been constructing its political identity with a view towards the existing East-West opposition. The West has been associated with prosperity, security, and democracy, while the East with poverty, unpredictability, and insecurity. Geopolitically, the West has aligned with the EU and the NATO countries, while the East with Russia and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). As a result, Latvia's main security options have been geared toward achieving closer relations with the West and involvement in international and European organizations. This has been seen as a counterbalance to Russia's influence in the Baltic region.

Common values, democracy, and a striving for welfare were the factors that dictated Latvia's orientation toward Western democracies and its identification with the West has been manifested by active participation in many Western political, economic, and security organizations. In fact, over the last decade, Latvia has become a full member of the United Nations (UN), Council of Europe (CE), Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC), and World Trade Organization (WTO). Special ties were also established with the United States, which had never recognized the legitimacy of Soviet rule in Latvia following World War II. For instance, Latvia's diplomatic mission in the U.S. (first established in 1922) continued to operate throughout 50 years of Soviet occupation, and became one of Latvia's first embassies following the restoration of independence in 1991.

Nevertheless, by 1994 it became clear that neither the UN nor the OSCE could provide security guarantees for Latvia. The need to achieve internal stability and economic reforms made accession to the NATO and EU a top priority of Latvia's foreign policy. It should be mentioned that the development of Latvia's foreign and economic policies, in accordance with priorities that were defined in the foreign policy concept adopted by the Saeima (Latvian parliament) on 7 April 1995, has been one of the success stories of the post-Cold War era.

Association with the EU would prove most advantageous in Latvia's economic reformation. However, from a security point of view, Latvia realized that the EU provided only "soft" security. It noted that aggression against a EU member did not

produce a reaction from the Union as a whole. The Helsinki summit in December, 1999, which set the formal target for ESDI backbone at a 60,000- troop force, concluded in its formal communiqué that “NATO remains the foundation of the collective defense of its members and will continue to have an important role in crisis management.”<sup>16</sup>

The country's foreign policy experts saw its future completely safeguarded only through "hard" security guarantees, i.e., by achieving membership in NATO. In fact, they believed that Latvia's participation in the most effective security organization would give it the best currently available security guarantees.<sup>17</sup> In 1994, after the withdrawal of Russian troops, Latvia applied for full membership in NATO. NATO's response to the aspirations of the candidate countries came in early 1994 in the form of an invitation to participate in the PfP programme.

Latvia sought membership in NATO in order to ensure its contribution to the formation of European security policy. For Latvia, membership in NATO meant commitment to the basic principles of the North Atlantic Treaty, democracy, rule of law, political and economic stability, as well as, the development of the Latvian National Armed Forces (LNAF) according to NATO standards:

We wish to avoid the repetition of our twentieth-century history, when we bore the tragic consequences of being pawned off to the "sphere of influence" of one belligerent superpower or another. Accession to NATO for Latvians means much more than joining an integrated military command, or participating in peacekeeping operations. For us, accession means becoming active partners in the historic process of building a Europe free of artificial barriers and unfounded divisions.<sup>18</sup>

Even prior to NATO membership, Latvian forces worked collectively with NATO forces to preserve peace, prevent war, and enhance the security and stability of the transatlantic community. In order to confirm Latvia's commitment to NATO and

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<sup>16</sup> Helsinki European Council Presidency Conclusion, [http://europa.eu.int/council/off/conclu/dec99/dec99\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/council/off/conclu/dec99/dec99_en.htm). Accessed 12 November 2004.

<sup>17</sup> Milestones From Partnership to Membership, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia, [www.am.gov.lv/en/nato/news/4447/4448/-23k](http://www.am.gov.lv/en/nato/news/4447/4448/-23k). Accessed 12 November 2004.

<sup>18</sup> The speech of Vaira Vike-Freiberga, President of the Republic of Latvia, Security Aspects of Integrating Latvia into Euro-Atlantic Structures, Folkets Hus, Stockholm, Sweden, 19 October 2000, <http://stockholm.usembassy.gov/bsconf/2000/freiberga.html>. Accessed 12 November 2004.

preclude any notion that Latvia would be just a security consumer, the personnel of LNAF frequently participated in peace-keeping operations in the Balkans prior to inception into NATO. In fact, Latvian troops and specialized personnel have participated in all NATO-led operations in the Balkans, as well as other endeavors by the OSCE and EU. Table 1 provides detailed information about the Latvian military's contribution to such missions from 1996 onwards.

**Table 1. Latvia's participation in International Peace-keeping Operations.<sup>19</sup>**

Country	Mission	Period	Troops
Bosnia	SFOR	1996-2004	8
Kosovo	KFOR	2000-2004	261
Afghanistan	ISAF	2003-2004	11
Macedonia	EUFOR	2003-2004	4
Georgia	OSCE	2000-2004	4
Iraq	OIF	2003-2004	218
Kosovo	KVM	1999	6

During the Prague Summit, on 21 November 2002, NATO Heads of State and Governments officially invited Latvia, together with six other countries, to begin accession talks to join NATO. It was a historic moment for Latvia, which left the times of strategic uncertainty and insecurity in the past. In sum, NATO membership was the most effective way to ensure the irreversibility of state sovereignty as well as:

- Ensure Latvia's opportunity to participate in forming the European security policy
- Foster long term stability in the Baltic region
- Strengthen the basis of Latvia's democracy
- Encourage Latvian economic development; as well as attract foreign investment
- Encourage the modernization of the National Armed Forces<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> The Latvian Ministry of Defense, [www.mod.gov.lv](http://www.mod.gov.lv). Accessed 3 November 2004.

### **III. NATO INSTRUMENTS OF INFLUENCE**

Historically, military alliances have formed to balance either countervailing power or a perceived threat, and they have collapsed when the need for a balance has disappeared. However, the collapse of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s did not lead to NATO's demise. For that reason, NATO is often referred to as the most successful military alliance in history. This success is attributed to NATO restructuring which has enabled it to participate in the development of cooperative structures for the whole of Europe.

In 1989 the face of Europe radically changed with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the eventual collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. The nuclear terror of the Cold War was over and NATO's future was uncertain. In order to preserve its role as a stable and important security organization and to take advantage of a clearly weakened Russia, NATO moved quickly to establish ties with the former Soviet republics and CEE communist satellites. A new era of dialogues and partnerships was born, culminating in NATO's establishment of several new forums for consultation and discussion, including all states of North America and Europe, and some states of North Africa.

In order to analyze NATO's impact on domestic actors, it is necessary to understand the incremental growth of the various instruments through which it fosters cooperation with aspirant countries. Latvia's involvement in the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC), the Partnership for Peace (PfP), the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC), and the Membership Action Plan (MAP) was crucial in becoming a full fledged member of NATO. The dynamic of these institutions was also important as they provided incentives and guidelines in the democratic reform of Central and Eastern European states. The different structures that were developed are important as the principle of democratic control of the armed forces.

#### **A. THE NORTH ATLANTIC COOPERATION COUNCIL**

After the Cold War, NATO had to reform its security concept, because the threat of massive military confrontation in Europe no longer existed. The road to expanded ties with Eastern Europe came at the Alliance's London Summit in July 1990. At that

Summit, NATO signed a declaration extending a "hand of friendship" to all Eastern European states. With the publication of the Rome Declaration and new Strategic Concept in November 1991, the basis for placing this evolving relationship on a more institutionalized footing was laid. According to the Strategic Concept, security is based on political, economic, social, and environmental considerations, as well as defense.<sup>20</sup>

However, the military dimension of NATO remained an essential factor and as a result, the Alliance continues to follow a number of fundamental principles, which include:

- To preserve the strategic balance within Europe
- To deter and defend against any threat of aggression against the territory of any NATO member state
- To serve as a transatlantic forum for Allied consultations on any issues that affect their vital interests, including possible developments posing risks for members' security, and for appropriate co-ordination of their efforts in fields of common concern
- To provide one of the indispensable foundations for a stable security environment in Europe, based on the growth of democratic institutions and commitment to the peaceful resolution of disputes, in which no country would be able to intimidate or coerce any European nation or to impose hegemony through the threat or use of force<sup>21</sup>

The establishment of the NACC in December 1991 brought together the member countries of NATO and, initially, nine Central and Eastern European countries, in a new consultative forum. Regular consultations took place on key political and security-related issues such as regional conflicts. In March 1992, participation in the NACC was expanded to include all members of the Commonwealth of Independent States.<sup>22</sup> The

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<sup>20</sup> NATO Handbook, NATO Office of Information and Press, Belgium, 1992, p. 66

<sup>21</sup> The Alliances New Strategic Concept, agreed by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Rome on 7-8 November 1991, paragraph 21

<sup>22</sup> NATO Handbook, NATO Office of Information and Press, Belgium, 2001, p. 40



North Atlantic Council (NAC) met with NACC cooperation partner countries regularly at the Ambassadorial level and a number of NATO committees subordinate to the NAC (e.g., Political Committee, Economic Committee, etc.) also met regularly with their cooperation partners.<sup>23</sup>

In fact, NACC had been seen as an instrument to strengthen the Baltic States political interface with NATO. The Republic of Latvia, as a founding member of NACC, in 1992 had informally expressed interest in joining NATO. NACC was essential in creating a framework to address hard security issues, ranging from military cooperation and defense planning to democratic concepts of civil-military relations.<sup>24</sup> Until its replacement by the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, NACC expanded to 38 members from CEE and former Soviet Union.

## **B. PARTNERSHIP FOR PEACE**

The next turning point in NATO's development occurred during the Brussels Summit in January 1994. During this summit, the main challenge was to respond to the security vacuum in Central and Eastern Europe. The reform process in NATO, including the establishment of the NACC and existence of the OSCE, had not done enough to assuage the fears of CEE states about Russia's assertiveness towards its neighbors.

As a result of this recognized shortfall, the Allies reaffirmed NATO's core functions and supported the development of a European Security and Defense Identity, and launched two main initiatives - Partnership for Peace and the commitment that the Alliance would eventually accept new members under Article 10 of the Washington Treaty. NATO invited the NACC and other OSCE countries to join PfP. NATO also confirmed that membership in the Alliance would remain open to other European states that were in a position to promote the principles of the Partnership Agreement and who would contribute to the security of the North Atlantic area. It was also clear that PfP did not contain NATO security guarantees for its new partners, although that was obviously the main aspiration of most Central European countries.

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<sup>23</sup> Statement issued at the Meeting of the NACC, NATO Headquarters, Brussels, 18 December 1992

<sup>24</sup> NATO Handbook, NATO Office of Information and Press, Belgium, 2001, p. 19

From the Latvian perspective, complementarity between the NACC and PFP was required in order to promote the salient features of Latvian security, as stated by Valdis Birkavs, former Minister of Foreign Affairs:

An essential element of a new NATO in a new Europe is the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council and enhanced Partnership for Peace. The EAPC and enhanced PFP will provide more opportunities for political dialogue of substance on ways to cope with new risks. Latvia is looking to eventual membership in NATO and the EU for security; we do not see guarantees from the east or the west as an answer to long term regional stability. Unilateral or bilateral guarantees are simply not in the cards for Latvia or Estonia.<sup>25</sup>

PfP was designed as an instrument for increasing confidence and co-operative effort to reinforce security in Europe. It offered participating states the possibility of strengthening their relations with NATO in accordance with their own individual interests and capabilities. Each Partner signed an individual partnership program, which detailed co-operation with NATO and committed the Partner to democratic principles. The key elements of its structure were the Political Military Steering Committee (PMSC), which formulates the policy behind PfP, and an advisory Military Cooperation Working Group (MCWG). To facilitate co-operation activities, PfP participating states had been invited to send permanent liaison officers to NATO Headquarters and to a separate Partnership Coordination Cell (PCC) at Mons (Belgium).

The Partnership for Peace programme set forth a number of practical objectives including:

- Ensuring democratic control of defense forces
- Developing co-operative military relations with NATO, for the purpose of joint planning, training, and exercises. These relations would strengthen the ability of PfP participants to undertake missions in the fields of peace keeping, search and rescue, humanitarian operations, and others as may subsequently be agreed

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<sup>25</sup> Baltic Sea Security and Cooperation Conference Program, Latvia between Madrid and Luxembourg and Beyond, Part. 2, <http://stockholm.usembassy.gov/bsconf/birkavs.html>. Accessed 12 November 2004.

- Maintaining the capability and readiness to contribute to operations under the authority of the UN and/or the responsibility of the OSCE
- Facilitating transparency in national defense planning and budgeting process
- Developing, over a longer term, forces that are better able to operate with those of the members of the North Atlantic Alliance

Through joint planning and joint exercises, the program helped develop the ability of the forces of partner countries to operate with NATO forces in such fields as peace keeping, search and rescue, and humanitarian operations. Latvia signed the Partnership for Peace framework document on 14 February 1994, and by the following June, submitted to NATO a more concrete PfP presentation document. The Individual Partnership Program was approved by Latvia and NATO on 8 February 1995.

Although PfP did not offer a security guarantee, paragraph 8 of the framework document stipulates that NATO will enter into consultations with every active participant in the partnership if that partner perceives any direct threat to its territorial integrity, political independence, or security.<sup>26</sup> For Latvia this was extremely important, because it opened up the possibility of approaching NATO in the event of a serious threat to its security. In the words of German Chancellor Helmut Kohl in his speech at the 31st Conference on Security Policy in Munich:

The Alliance sees the growing cooperation and integration of the former Warsaw Pact countries as making a central contribution to the future security of the whole of Europe. To that end NATO has offered the states of Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe and the successor states to the Soviet Union a “Partnership for Peace”. This is a clear signal which is how the German Government also perceives it that NATO is open to new members.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Partnership for Peace; a framework document, NATO Brief, 2/1994, p. 29

<sup>27</sup> 31<sup>st</sup> Conference on Security Policy in Munich, “European security and the role of Germany”, Federal Defense Ministry, Bonn, 1994, p. 22

It was made clear that PfP offered these countries the opportunity to show NATO members that they qualify for membership in the Alliance. As part of the larger goal of incorporating non-NATO members into the alliance, PfP has played an important role in strengthening NATO's confidence-building role. By inviting states such as Ukraine, Russia, and Sweden to participate in many ministerial and military meetings of the Alliance, these countries were able to gain an understanding of NATO's mission and goals.

### **C. THE EURO-ATLANTIC PARTNERSHIP COUNCIL**

By 1997, the NACC had played a significant role in overcoming the suspicions of the Cold War and moved forward in establishing the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC), with the objective of assuring increased engagement by all the partners in this new framework. One of the differences between the two formations was that EAPC included the neutral non-allies as full members, which was not the case with the NACC.

Upon its establishment on 30 May 1997, in Sintra, Portugal, the EAPC adopted the NACC work plan as its own, with a view to replacing it with an even more extensive agenda of topics for consultations. According to the founders of EAPC, the NACC members and the PfP partners, its establishment symbolized “[the] next step forward in raising to a new level the dynamic and multifaceted political and military cooperation” and “[would] make a strong contribution to cooperative approaches to security and form an enduring part of the European security architecture.”<sup>28</sup>

The Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council was designed as the political structure of PfP and was a logical continuation of the amplified trust between NATO and PfP members. This forum provided the overarching framework for consultations among its members on a broad range of political and security-related issues. The cooperative mechanism formed the framework for enhanced efforts in both an expanded political dimension for PfP and in practical cooperation under PfP.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Chairman's Summary of the meetings of the North Atlantic Cooperation Council and the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, Sintra, Portugal, 30 May 1997, par. 3

<sup>29</sup> NATO, “Basic Document of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council,” May 30, 1997, NATO On-line Library, <http://www.nato.int/docu/basic/b970530a.htm>. Accessed 12 November 2004.

EAPC activities are based on a two-year action plan that focuses on consultation and cooperation on a range of political and security-related matters, including regional issues, arms control, international terrorism, peacekeeping, defense economic issues, civil emergency planning, and scientific and environmental issues.<sup>30</sup>

The key elements of its structure consist of:

- Regular meetings at ministerial and ambassadorial level
- Closer cooperation with the Political-Military Steering Committee (PMSC), the Military Committee(MC), and the Political Committee(PC)
- A four- tiered Action Plan that included previous NACC issue areas, PfP areas of cooperation, and a short-term planning for EAPC consultations and practical cooperation<sup>31</sup>

NATO further strengthened the role of partner countries in its planning and decision-making process and adopted new terms of reference for the enhanced PfP in order to broaden cooperation into new fields. It also developed the Partner Work Program (PWP) and the Individual Partner Program (IPP). The planning and review process became more and more significant and the number of standardized agreements available to partners was expanded in order to facilitate exercise planning and more general interoperability objectives, thereby reflecting the importance of partner force contributions to ongoing and future operations. Latvia and other aspirant countries welcomed these new initiatives. As minister Talavs Jundzis pointed out in his speech on EAPC Defense Ministerial Sessions in Brussels:

Latvia welcomes new NATO PARP procedures where Partnership Goals will be based on PARP Ministerial Guidance. It is important that Partnership activities become more aligned to NATO's own activities, and the PARP is a prime example in this respect. The implementation of PARP Interoperability Objectives (IOs) prepare our armed forces for eventual membership in the Alliance, as they became better able to operate

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30 NATO Handbook, 2001, p. 42

31 Basic Document of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership, for details on the biennially 1998-2002 EAPC Action Plans see Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, <http://www.nato.int/pfp/eapc.htm>. Accessed 12 November 2004.

together with Allied forces. Latvia hopes that Partnership Goals will contribute in providing Partner nations with a clearer picture and guidance of where the priorities are.”<sup>32</sup>

At the Madrid Summit the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland were invited to start accession talks and NATO reconfirmed its Open Door policy towards the remaining nine aspirants and stated it would consider further enlargement in 1999. In words of Brian E. Carlson, U.S. Ambassador to the republic of Latvia:

In its political dealings and through the EAPC, NATO is reaching out a hand of friendship and partnership to nations in transition. In Eastern Europe and Central Asia, nations that once were part of or heavily influenced by the Soviet Union, today are moving toward democracy, free-market economies, and the commonly accepted political and human rights standards we enjoy.<sup>33</sup>

#### **D. MEMBERSHIP ACTION PLAN**

By the NATO’s Washington Summit in April 1999, Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic had joined NATO. The summit introduced programs to make PfP more operational and approved the new Alliance Strategic Concept, which for the first time mentioned PFP as an Alliance activity. It also launched a Defense Capabilities Initiative to improve interoperability among Alliance forces and, where applicable, between Alliance and partner forces.<sup>34</sup>

The new Strategic Concept committed the Alliance to pursuing “a just and lasting peaceful order in Europe” that entails not only ensuring the defense of its members but contributing to peace and stability in the Euro-Atlantic region.<sup>35</sup> It also specifically emphasized the PfP’s role in achieving Atlantic security. Furthermore, the new Strategic Concept decisively states that further enlargement is in the strategic interests of the Alliance.

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32 Address of Talavs Jundzis, Defense Minister of Latvia, EAPC Defense Ministerial Session Brussels, 12 June 1998, [www.nato.int/docu/speech/1998/s980612f.htm](http://www.nato.int/docu/speech/1998/s980612f.htm). Accessed 12 November 2004.

33 What Latvia Offers NATO : Remarks at the International Rotary Club, Riga, 1998, [www.usembassy.lv/EN/Speeches](http://www.usembassy.lv/EN/Speeches). Accessed 12 November 2004.

34 <http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/1999/p99-065e.htm>. Accessed 12 November 2004.

35 NATO Press Release NAC-S(99)65, “The Alliance’s Strategic Concept,” 24 April 1999, <http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/1999/p99-065e.htm>. Accessed 12 November 2004.

MAP was designed to convince the remaining nine aspirants that Article 10 (the Open Door policy) was not hollow, and to assist them in developing forces and capabilities that could operate with NATO under its new Operational Capabilities Concept (OCC). It was also designed to incorporate lessons learned in the accession discussions with the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland.

Map's program laid out the following areas:

- The submission by aspiring members of individual annual national programmes on their preparations for possible future membership, covering political, economic, defense, resource, security, and legal aspects
- a focused and candid feedback mechanism on aspirant countries' progress on their programmes that includes both political and technical advice, as well as annual 19+1 meetings at Council level to assess progress<sup>36</sup>
- a clearing-house to help coordinate assistance by NATO and by member states to aspirant countries in the defense/military field
- a defense planning approach for aspirants which includes elaboration and review of agreed planning targets<sup>37</sup>

In 1999, the United States conducted defense reform assessments with aspirant countries, which reflected the need for the Baltic States to build defense establishments from scratch and develop combined military institutions. Military assessment studies and the MAPs proved to be instrumental in devising the ANP's of aspirant countries and in directing efforts to meet the criteria for NATO membership in line with national defense specifications. Moreover, the ANP's generated by each partner allowed each to set their own objectives and targets on preparations for possible future membership.

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<sup>36</sup> The dialogues with interested Partner countries were conducted in two formats: a series of high level meetings (at the level of Head of State, Prime Minister, Foreign and/or Defence Minister) were held with the North Atlantic Council, and a comprehensive dialogue was conducted between senior officials from Partner countries and a team from the NATO International Staffs, NATO Handbook, 2001, p. 65

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

It is obvious that by introducing the MAP concept NATO practically changed the rules and criteria for membership. While the decision to admit Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary was based on political considerations and did not depend greatly on the progress of economic and military reforms, subsequent new members would have to work harder to meet the new “technical” requirements for membership and assure appropriate spending on defense to achieve military compatibility with NATO. In fact, the new requirements made the process longer and more difficult for the new aspirants, but it was believed that it would ensure a smoother process of adaptation after admission.

During his visit to Sofia in October 2000, NATO secretary general Lord George Robertson told defense ministers of eight aspiring NATO members that the Alliance would not accept those who fall short of NATO defense and modern warfare standards. According to Robertson, “the alliance will enlarge again when NATO is ready, when those nations aspiring to membership are ready, and when their membership will contribute to security and stability in Europe as a whole.”<sup>38</sup>

The MAP has helped the countries aspiring to NATO membership to increasingly focus their preparations on meeting the goals and priorities set out in the Plan. Moreover, its implementation has ceased to be a matter concerning only ministries of foreign affairs and defense. With the establishment of inter-ministerial meetings at the national level, fulfilling the objectives of the Plan is increasingly engaging other government departments in a coordinated and systematic effort.

The MAP gives substance to NATO’s commitment to keep its door open. However, participation in the MAP does not guarantee future membership, nor does the Plan consist simply of a checklist for aspiring countries to fulfill. Decisions to invite aspirants to start accession talks will be taken within NATO by consensus and on a case-by-case basis. MAP also does not replace the PfP program. The aspirants’ participation in PfP and its Planning and Review Process (PARP) has been tailored to their needs. Full participation in PfP/PARP is essential because it allows aspirant countries to develop interoperability with NATO forces and to prepare their force structures and capabilities

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38 Robertson Warns NATO Aspirants Membership Not a Gift, Reuters, October 14, 2000



for possible future membership. In the words of Vaira Vike-Freiberga, President of the Republic of Latvia , in her speech at the 5th Anniversary Conference on Baltic Sea Region Security and Co-operation in Stockholm, Sweden, 19 October 2000:

Each country should be evaluated on its own merits, according to objective criteria for accession that have been clearly defined and that are the same for all. Latvia is certainly committed to an all-out effort that will ensure its continued progress towards accession at an accelerated rate. Latvia will continue implementing the practical measures needed to qualify for NATO membership, which centre on the implementation of the country's Membership Action Plan (MAP). MAP is an important new element in Latvia's individual preparations for future membership in NATO. We are taking these procedures very seriously, and are pleased by the high evaluation of our progress and achievements in Brussels.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> <http://stockholm.usembassy.gov/bsconf/2000/freiberga.html> Accessed 12 November 2004.

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#### **IV. NATO ROLE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF LATVIAN ARMED FORCES**

Along with the regaining of its independence in 1991, Latvia procured all the obligations of an independent state. In particular, the creation of state defense was of great importance. In fact, it was very difficult to make plans for establishing armed forces as an indispensable institution of a sovereign state as long as there were Soviet military forces stationed on Latvia's soil. It should be mentioned, that the Soviet armed forces were in charge of the state defense between 1941 and 1991. Besides, when the Soviet troops withdrew from Latvia "[all] that was left behind consisted of 26 sunken submarines and ships leaking acid, oil, and phosphorous. That was the foundation on which Latvia had to begin building of its armed forces".<sup>40</sup>

The process of building national defense legislation and its own armed forces started with the establishment of the Ministry of Defense in September 1991. The major task of Latvia's defense and security policy was to secure and guarantee national sovereignty, territorial integrity, and security of the population of the country. The Swedish-Finnish rapid response force model had been chosen as the backbone of Latvia's defense concept.<sup>41</sup> However, by the middle of 1993 Latvia found itself with two different armies (the Defense Forces (DF) and the Home Guard (HG)), each subordinate to different institutions, complicated by the Russian forces still stationed on its territory. The DF, formed mainly from former Soviet officers with ethnic Latvian background, totaled 6,600 soldiers, including 1,650 in the Army, 630 in the Navy, 180 in the Air Force, and 4,140 in the Border Guard. The HG, with an estimated 17,000 members, was formed from volunteers primarily with little military experience. Overall, Latvian defense capabilities could be characterized in the words of a former advisor to the State president:

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<sup>40</sup> NATO Parliamentary Assembly, Committee Reports, 'European Security: The Baltic Contribution', Chapt IV. Latvia, Defence and security, 42

<sup>41</sup> Military of Latvia, [http://www.fact-index.com/m/mi/military\\_of\\_latvia.html](http://www.fact-index.com/m/mi/military_of_latvia.html) Accessed 16 November 2004.

The problems encountered by both of the evolving forces are significant; lack of consensus on doctrine, lack of consensus how the defense forces should be organized, armed and equipped. Not the least of the problems is foreign humanitarian assistance – the defense ministry tends to accept anything that is offered for free without a clear understanding how it would be used and soon the warehouses are bulging. ...There are many issues that are not resolved, and even more not even addressed. There is no military threat analysis, no defense concept, no defense plan and therefore obviously no justified armed forces end strength or development plan. The Defense Ministry and Defense Forces lack experience with cost estimates, budgetary process, and force planning – consequently the realm of what is possible for a small country's defense forces financially has not been determined.<sup>42</sup>

Nevertheless, Latvia was improving the military capabilities of the LNAF and its readiness to participate in NATO-led and other international operations, and during the last decade, Latvia's defense capabilities have improved steadily in accordance with NATO's capabilities development guidelines. Finally, by joining NATO in 2004, Latvia has undertaken significant steps in developing its armed forces and aligning them to NATO compatibility standards.

In order to trace the impact of NATO partnership framework development on the development process of the LNAF, this chapter analyzes the following four aspects: regional cooperation, international cooperation, evaluation of Latvian mission experience and defense budgeting. The evidence shows that all these aspects have been initiated and development completed as a result of Latvia's efforts in gaining NATO membership.

#### **A. REGIONAL COOPERATION**

History has shown that the Baltic States cannot view their security in isolation from one another. Having already learned this lesson, Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania, along with building up their own national armed forces, have extended and deepened their cooperation in defense matters:

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<sup>42</sup> Gundars Zalkans, Advisor to the State president of Latvia, The Development of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Latvia, Baltic Defense Review 1/1999.

Security is indivisible wealth and must be cultivated in the spirit of close regional concord. Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania have the task to ensure, to the best of their ability, the security of the Baltic region, which is a necessary precondition to stability in Europe. Such a future can be shaped in co-operation with our neighbors, provided that we have the will to do it.<sup>43</sup>

Given the small size of their armed forces and the strong financial constraints they face, neither Latvia nor the other two Baltic States can afford to build powerful armed forces that match those of the larger and richer members of the Alliance. Instead, they have sought to enhance their value to the Alliance by developing specialized capabilities in certain areas. In fact, cooperation on joint projects has been a useful experience for the Baltic States, enhancing their future interoperability as part of a wider group of nations in NATO.<sup>44</sup>

Since summer 1992, when regular meetings of Baltic defense officials started to take place, a significant level of defense cooperation between Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania has been achieved. During the post cold war period, Baltic countries have implemented the following joint military projects:<sup>45</sup>

- **BALTBAT** -- Baltic Battalion, composed of a company from each of the three Baltic States, was the first and most successful initiative, launched in 1994. It was a combined infantry battalion, based in Latvia, capable of participating in peacekeeping operations and contributing to regional security. BALTBAT, deployed as part of the Nordic Brigade, has had extensive experience in peacekeeping operations in the Balkans. The joint peacekeeping battalion was an important expression of the Baltic States' readiness to contribute to international peacekeeping. At the same time, it helped the Baltic States gain valuable experience in working closely with NATO.

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<sup>43</sup> Lennart Meri, President of Estonia, Speech at the opening of the Baltic Defence College, February 25, 1999, <http://www.visual-tutor.com/meribook.pdf> Accessed 12 November 2004.

<sup>44</sup> Baltic Defense Co-operation - Main Joint Projects, 16 Sep. 2003, <http://www.am.gov.lv/en/nato/4494/4498/> Accessed 14 November 2004.

<sup>45</sup> Military Co-operation of the Baltic States, <http://www.mod.gov.lv/index.php?pid=1245> Accessed 12 November 2004.

- **BALTRON** -- Baltic Naval Squadron, established in 1997, was established to enhance the capabilities of the Baltic Naval Forces and coordinate the implementation of various naval tasks. It is composed of a combined Latvian-Lithuanian-Estonian staff and national ships from the navies of the three Baltic countries. BALTRON is based in Estonia. First and foremost, however, BALTRON conducts mine clearance activities and search-and-rescue operations in the Baltic Sea, and seeks to bring the Baltic Navies in line with relevant NATO standards (The long-term goal was to make the Squadron interoperable and compatible with NATO and able to conduct mine countermeasure operations ).
- **BALTNET** -- Baltic Air Surveillance Network was set up in 1996 to gather and coordinate airspace surveillance information. The goal of the initiative was to establish a unified air space surveillance system in all three Baltic countries and make it compatible with similar Western and NATO air defense systems. The BALTNET system was launched in 2000, with a Regional Air Surveillance Coordination Centre (RASCC) established in Lithuania. The RASCC receives flight plan information and radar data from national civil and military radars in order to produce a Recognized Air Picture. It is envisaged that from 2005, BALTNET data will be shared with NATO HQ in Brussels and most NATO C2 systems.
- **BALTDEFCOL** -- Baltic Defense College has been set up in Tartu, Estonia. Its primary function is to train senior staff officers and civilians from the Baltic States in NATO-based staff procedures, strategic planning and management. Besides students from Baltic States, BALTDEFCOL had officers from fourteen NATO, NATO Partner and other invited countries during the academic year 2002-2003, with Georgia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina represented for the first time.

In fact, on completing studies at the College, graduates are ready for work on international staffs, serve as chiefs of staff of military regions or at infantry brigade level, work in policy-making and long-term planning positions in the Ministry of Defense or on the General Staff, or train officers in their respective national armed forces.

- **BALTPERS** -- launched in 1996, is a joint project for setting up a registration and management system for persons subject to military service. The project was aimed at developing a national system for each of the Baltic States, which also would serve not only the military forces but also civilian units that are tasked in case of readiness or mobilization.
- **BALTMED** -- the establishment of a Baltic medical unit. The project started in 2000 with providing the necessary professional training for the medical personnel. Each of the Baltic States also received one battalion aid station and one company aid station. Close co-operation will be continued in 2005 and will include procurements (for lower levels through battalion level) as well as training opportunities.
- **BALTCCIS** -- a unified Baltic information system, has been launched in 1999 with its central server located in Latvia. The Baltic Command, Control and Information System project was led by the German Air Force and designed by the German Air Force Programming Centre. BALTCCIS plays an important role in the development of modern staff area C3 functionality at the national levels of all three Baltic States. It also enabled the Baltic States to monitor the movement and status of troops and different types of vehicles within and around their borders.

The Baltic States also initiated several smaller projects such as BALTLOG (a joint Baltic Logistics System) and BALTDISLEARN (a joint Baltic education program for officers). The three Baltic States are also cooperating in joint arms and equipment purchases in order to save money. In August 2001, Latvia and Estonia agreed to jointly purchase long-range radars, which now form a part of the BALTNET, and are fully

integrated into similar NATO systems.<sup>46</sup> It was also important that the working language of all these projects be English, and that all have strict conformity to NATO policies and operations.

Latvia considers that a coordinated defense policy improves the defense capacity of all three Baltic States, enabling them to make a greater contribution to the North Atlantic Alliance, and aims to further explore areas in which the Baltic States could jointly specialize in order to provide well-defined and significant capabilities to NATO. Experience acquired in the course of implementing joint projects has helped the Baltic States develop political and military interoperability, and establish the culture of compromise and consensus necessary for successful cooperation within NATO.<sup>47</sup>

## **B. INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION**

International co-operation is one of the key elements in strengthening Latvia's security and providing efficiency in its state defense system. Moreover, co-operation with NATO member states is an essential pre-condition for Latvia's further integration into NATO, which increases its military interoperability with NATO and optimizes the use of Baltic States defense resources.

Since co-operation with the US has been set as one of the priorities of Latvian defense and security policy, its main and the most active partner has been the United States of America. The basic document that determined relations between U.S. and Baltic countries was the Charter of Partnership among the Baltic Sea Countries and the US (signed in January 1998). The Charter confirmed the Baltic Sea countries' right and chance of integration into the Euro-Atlantic structures, as well as their right of free decision and choice on the form of individual or collective provisions of their own security. Co-operation also takes place within the International Military Education and Training Programme (IMET), Foreign Military Financing Programme (FMF) and US Military Liaison Team Programme (co-operation with the Michigan National Guard).<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> F. Stephen Larrabee, The Baltic States and NATO Membership, RAND, 2003, [www.rand.org](http://www.rand.org). Accessed 12 November 2004.

<sup>47</sup> Baltic Defense Co-operation - Main Joint Projects, 16 Sep. 2003, <http://www.am.gov.lv/en/nato/4494/4498/> Accessed 12 November 2004.

<sup>48</sup> Bilateral Co-operation, <http://www.mod.gov.lv/index.php?pid=1247> Accessed 12 November 2004.



Funds from the US Military Education and Training (IMET) program ensure high specialization-level training in the US for about 40-60 Latvian military personnel each year. US also grants funds to Latvia within other programs, which support the work of US Expert Team Latvia in the Ministry of Defense(MoD), supporting Latvian experts in developing and implementing the logistics and procurement system, the command, control, communications and computer system, the personnel management system and the servicemen training system. Funds granted by US were utilized for procuring the equipment for LATBAT (1st Infantry Battalion), Special Task Unit (STU), NBC (Nuclear, Biological and Chemical) Defense Unit, as well as for other NAF units. Funds are used for developing an effective and NATO compliant communications system (in collaborations with the US corporation *HARRIS*), as well as BALTNET/Regional Airspace Initiative (RAI).<sup>49</sup>

There is also a very active co-operation with Nordic countries, especially with Denmark. The main emphasis is on various training courses for servicemen, personnel management training, and material aid. Denmark has been one of the most active states assisting in the establishment of a Junior Officer School in Cesis. Denmark supports the establishment and further development of Latvia's search and rescue capabilities as well. The Danish experts evaluated Latvian Defense System in 1998, which contributed to a clearer picture of the future needs required to improve the planning process of the LNAF.

Additionally, Latvia has established a cooperative relationship with Finland in 2001, when a Co-operation Agreement was signed. Currently, the main emphasis is on co-operation within several multilateral projects. The first Co-operation Plan with Finland was signed in 2002, which envisaged co-operation mainly on mobilization, weapon control, and procurement planning.

Cooperative agreements with Norway have been reached between the Navy and the NG, with an emphasis on organization of training in winter conditions. Norway also provides assistance in the field of air surveillance and information technology development within the BALTNET project. Norway has also provided important

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<sup>49</sup> Bilateral Co-operation, <http://www.mod.gov.lv/index.php?pid=1247> Accessed 12 November 2004.

assistance in explosive neutralization issues, i.e., in establishing the School for Neutralization of Unexploded Ammunition, Baltic States' Divers School in Liepaja, as well as, establishing and developing the Navy Training Centre in Liepaja. An inter-ministry expert commission has acknowledged that the Norwegian coast guard model is the most suitable for the Latvian conditions. In 2001, Norway donated three Storm class patrol boats to Latvia, and in January 2003, Norway donated the mine cutter HNoMS Vale to the LR Navy. It was renamed to Virsaitis and is currently the biggest vessel of the Latvian Navy.<sup>50</sup>

One of the priorities of bilateral co-operation with the United Kingdom is English language classes. There are both British Council coordinated English language classes in Latvia and classes for the Latvian defense representatives at UK Language Schools. There are also seminars and conferences held in the UK on personnel, crisis management, logistics, and other relevant military issues. The UK has participated in developing the concept of the National Defense Academy, Instructor School and Recruitment Centre. Since 1999, the UK has provided a top-level civil budget expert who has led the implementation of a Western-type planning, programming and budget formation system in the MoD. Co-operation in this field will be continued until 2005. Additionally, since 2000, Latvia's LNAF Medical and Military Police units have participated in the KFOR operations in Kosovo as a part of a British brigade.

There has also been active co-operation with Germany for several years in the field of training. Every year, 30 NAF representatives are trained in the German Military Academy, the Bundeswehr Education and Practical Training institutions, the Bundeswehr Verification Centre, as well as other training institutions. Germany has also donated a PAP simulator (mine sweeping trainer) to the Liepaja. In fact, Germany is a leading country for establishment of a NATO compatible C-4 system (BALTCCIS project). A German advisor provides consultations on logistics to the Navy.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Bilateral Co-operation, <http://www.mod.gov.lv/index.php?pid=1247> Accessed 12 November 2004.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

France has provided significant military training to the representatives of the Latvian Air Forces, Navy (especially scuba diving training), Land Forces, and STU, and has assisted with French language training. Future cooperative efforts will include officer and instructor training, as well as cooperation with the French Navy, Land Forces and National Gendarmerie.<sup>52</sup>

Cooperation has also been developed with states outside the Alliance, particularly with states whose support and experience have significantly contributed to the achievement of Latvia's security goals. Sweden should be noted as the most important one, as they are vitally interested in the peace and security of the Baltic region. The cooperation with Sweden includes military personnel training, as well as cooperation between the National Guard and Navy (The Swedish Armed Forces in collaboration with the LNAF perform mine and unexploded ammunition sweeping operations on the Latvian waters). Every year Sweden admits Latvian cadets and officers for training in various military schools. Swedish support in developing the personnel system is of great value as well. Swedish advisors visit Latvian MoD and LNAF on a regular basis to consult on conceptual defense issues.<sup>53</sup>

Latvia is also interested in developing a positive and pragmatic cooperative relationship with Russia. In 2002, Latvia invited Russia to participate in an international military exercise in Latvian territorial waters for the first time. In return, Russia has invited Latvian representatives to participate in conferences on democratic control of the armed forces and civil-military cooperation.

Nevertheless, Latvia is focusing on changing itself from a security and aid receiving country into a security providing country. In order to increase stability in Europe and in all the transatlantic space, it is important for Latvia to share its experience with countries that have just started to establish their democratic system.

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

From its experiences in joining NATO in 2004, Latvia is prepared to provide consultations and expert advice, train civil and military personnel, and provide material aid. Latvia is ready to share its own experience on democratization, defense system planning, and development of the armed forces.

### **C. EVALUATION OF LATVIAN MISSION EXPERIENCE**

BALTBAT is seen as the most successful cooperative project of the Baltic States, primarily due to its success international peacekeeping efforts. In April 1994 the Ministers of Defense of the Nordic countries signed a memorandum of understanding in support of the Baltic States formation of a peacekeeping unit. Later in September in Copenhagen, the Defense Ministers of eight countries<sup>54</sup> concluded an agreement on the establishment of the unit. In 1996, the Latvian parliament adopted legislation sending Latvian troops abroad and authorizing their participation in internationally mandated operations.

Since the establishment of BALTBAT, Latvia has made significant efforts in providing well-trained personnel for NATO-led Peace Support Operations. Currently, Latvia participates in the following operations:<sup>55</sup>

- SFOR(1 headquarters officer )
- KFOR (104 soldiers: 94 infantry company, 5 headquarters officers, 5 military policemen.)
- ISAF (8 military medics, 1 headquarters officer and 2 drivers.)
- OIF (120 militaries: 98 infantry company, 10 headquarters officers, 6 EOD specialists, 2 military policemen, 4 national support element.)
- NATO-led OSCE mission in Georgia LNAF (1 military observer)

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<sup>54</sup> Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom

<sup>55</sup> Latvian Participation in International Peace-keeping Missions, Ministry of defense of Latvia, <http://www.mod.gov.lv/index.php?pid=13164> Accessed 12 November 2004.

With participation in these peacekeeping missions, Latvian soldiers for the first time started working under Western standards. They received invaluable experience in learning to use sophisticated weaponry and communications equipment, learning and becoming familiar with the procedures applied by NATO member states, and an increased understanding of various aspects of interoperability between different types of forces. The most important aspect of this experience was that the service took place in conditions close to combat, experience which can hardly be overestimated. Knowledge of the English language among the Latvian soldiers has also improved. Another positive aspect is that many mission participants have been promoted, which allows them to apply their knowledge and experience and introduce important changes in their units.

BALTBAT has unquestionably made its invaluable contribution to the overall development of the defense capabilities of Latvia. In the framework of the BALTBAT, project officers, NCOs, and soldiers of the LNAF have received high-level training and acquired valuable international operational experience. In other words, through the BALTBAT project, Latvian armed forces received an infantry unit, trained up to NATO standards, capable of performing national defense tasks, as well as peacekeeping and peace enforcement.

#### **D. DEFENSE BUDGETING**

The special historical circumstances of Latvia's rebirth as a sovereign state meant that its defense had to be organized from scratch. Besides, after 1991 the country's economy was in the process of changing to a market economy and attempting to undo the damage of the Soviet past. Social demands claimed a large part of the state budget and defense suffered from severe shortfalls. In fact, year after year, the Ministry of Defense lived with "survival budgets", which languished at a level less than 0.7% of GNP. In reality, these budgets barely covered the salaries of present staff, leaving morale suffering and little or no room for improvement in capabilities. Much needed reforms of the regular (conscript) army and its associated structures have been held up and parliament has been reluctant to tighten lax conscription laws.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> A frank overview of Latvia's defense problems is found in Henning Frantzen, 'The Baltic response to NATO's enlargement', *Jane's Intelligence Review*, October 1997.

While the economy of Latvia was improving in the late 1990s, its aspiration process into NATO became critical. In 1998, the politicians of the most influential European countries and North America openly doubted the preparedness of Latvia to join NATO. Moreover, US politicians were actively discussing the possibility of admitting Lithuania, Slovakia, and Slovenia during the next wave of NATO enlargement. Latvia was also estimated as the weakest among the Baltic States, especially in terms of military budgeting (the defense budget of 1999 accounted for 0.84% of GDP).<sup>57</sup>

However, the process of seeking membership in NATO increased the political salience of the defense issue and highlighted the need for credible and visible efforts in order to qualify as a candidate. The evidence suggests that NATO, by launching the MAP in 1999, had a decisive impact on Latvia's defense planning. In 1999, the NATO Integration Council determined that Latvia's defense budget should be gradually increased, reaching the benchmark for NATO admission of 2 percent of the gross domestic product in 2003.<sup>58</sup>

Latvia's Membership Action Plan was approved by the Cabinet of Ministers on Sept. 21, 1999, and on Sept. 27 it was submitted to NATO's Deputy Secretary General. Since then, Latvia has increased its defense budget consistently, reaching 2% of GDP in 2003. Moreover, the Parliament in 2002 introduced amendments to the Law on Defense Financing stipulating that the defense budget will be maintained at the level of 2% of GDP for the period up to the year 2008. Positive and stable macroeconomic developments and macroeconomic affordability also provide a solid basis for the sustainability of defense spending for coming years. Since 1999, the defense expenditure has grown nearly 240%. Close consultations with NATO and Allied countries on budgetary and defense planning issues have led to the smooth assimilation of these budgetary allocations.

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<sup>57</sup> Latvia in the world, the Chancery of the President of Latvia, <http://www.president.lv/index.php?pid=2278> Accessed 12 November 2004.

<sup>58</sup> This requirement for the NATO candidate states was announced during the Washington summit in 1999

**Table 2.        Latvian Defense Budget and Projected Growth**

Year	% of GDP	Million Ls <sup>59</sup>
1999	0.84	32.68
2000	0.98	42.44
2001	1.15	54.87
2002	1.75	90.87
2003	2.0	110.06
2004	2.0	121.96
2005	2.0	132.94
2006	2.0	144.85

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59 The Defense Budget in Table 2 is shown in millions of Lats (Ls) (USD1 = Ls 0.585).

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## **V. NATO MEMBERSHIP AND LATVIAN-RUSSIAN RELATIONS**

### **A. BACKGROUND**

The dynamic process of changes in the Baltic Sea region after the break-up of Soviet Union and the end of global confrontation transformed the entire security system in the region. The main point of conflicts and the source of security dynamics shifted to the sphere of relations between the restored Baltic States – Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia -with Russia.

The Baltic security dilemma emerged from the fact that they “[...] are too small to feel secure beside one of the world’s greatest states without any additional and tangible security guarantees. Russia’s goodwill is a sound guarantee but it is clearly insufficient because the Baltic States have never had and will not have any influence over it.”<sup>60</sup>

In order to observe the evolution of NATO’s relationship with former Soviet countries, Latvia and Russia in particular, this chapter will assess the institutional effects of this relationship on Latvian national security in the post Cold War era.

As soon as it became independent, Latvia made clear its intention to become part of the geopolitical area known as "the West". It refused to join the Commonwealth of Independent States and its foreign and defense policy in those initial years was largely directed towards protecting itself from renewed interference from Russia in its affairs. However, Latvia’s future remained tied up with internal developments in Russia.

While the Soviet Union was a dominating power in the Baltic Sea region, the Russian Federation, as its successor, received only insignificant areas on the Baltic seacoast: the Kaliningrad exclave and the St. Petersburg region. The collapse of the SU also caused an acute identity crisis in Russia, since, unlike the rest of the former Soviet republics, the Russian Federation, as a state and a nation, had no anchoring in the past that could be read separately from the history of the Russian Empire and the Soviet

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<sup>60</sup> G. Vitkus, Changing Security Regime in the Baltic Sea Region, <http://www.nato.int/acad/fellow/99-01/Vitkus.pdf> Accessed 12 November 2004.

Union.<sup>61</sup> Moreover, Latvia still accommodated armed forces controlled by Russia and many Russians (immigrants from the Soviet Union), who suddenly found themselves living abroad as the Soviet Union collapsed. Such changes in this situation gave rise to a potential conflict with Russia, because of the ensuing threat to Latvia's national security. Russian troops (stationed in Latvia), minorities, and common border were major preoccupations for the Latvian government in its relations with Russia.

Unfortunately, it turned out that reaching an agreement with Russia on the issue of the withdrawal of Russian troops was an extremely difficult one. Therefore, no date of withdrawal was mentioned at the beginning of negotiations. However, in later negotiations, 1997-1999, was mentioned as the time limit for withdrawal.<sup>62</sup> In general, Russia followed the old line, namely – high negative rhetoric, low constructive activity in relations with the government of Latvia. Thus the only way for a speedy resolution to the problem of an entrenched foreign army was for Latvian political leaders to immediately internationalize the problem, making it a problem for the entire international community.<sup>63</sup>

This tactic of bringing the withdrawal issue into international forums soon bore fruits. In 1992, "Baltic's common problem" had been frequently addressed in a number of international forums, such as the meeting of NATO's foreign ministers, G-7 summit meeting in Munich, and the CSCE conference in Budapest. In fact, western governments and international organizations put unequivocal pressure on Russia for speedy

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61 V. Morozov, Russia and the Baltic States : Letting go of a troubled past, [http://www.jamestown.org/publications\\_details.php?volume\\_id=16&issue\\_id=628](http://www.jamestown.org/publications_details.php?volume_id=16&issue_id=628) Accessed 12 November 2004.

62 The negotiations between Russia and all three Baltic states on the issue of troop withdrawals started on January 1992. According to the reached agreement, troops would begin to leave the Baltic States in February. But no indication of a date for the completion of troop withdrawals was given. In response to Baltic demands for immediate troop withdrawal, the Russian side repeated that the withdrawal of troops before 1997-99 would depend on material provision for the servicemen.

63 G. Vitkus, Changing Security Regime in the Baltic Sea Region, <http://www.nato.int/acad/fellow/99-01/Vitkus.pdf> Accessed 12 November 2004.

withdrawal.<sup>64</sup> The analysis suggests that the clearly stated opinion and pressure from the international community was a major factor in speeding up the process. The western leaders' assurance that they understood the logistical problems (relocating and re-housing the soldiers and officers, in particular) did not justify the stationing of troops on the territory of a sovereign state.<sup>65</sup>

It should be mentioned that the CSCE was one of the most influential international forums that ensured successful withdrawal of the Russian troops from the Baltic States. However it soon became clear that the organization was of little use in further settlement and normalization of Latvian-Russian relations. The prospect of NATO expansion and obvious Baltic aspirations to join the Alliance, kept security squarely in the center of Russian policy deliberations.

As it is known the conflict acquired another shape upon withdrawal of the Russian army: a miniature cold war between the Baltic States and Russia started, with its periods of sharpening of conflict and détente. Meanwhile CSCE could undertake practically nothing to contribute to the end of this war. In the best case, it could preserve the *status quo* but could not act as a sufficient factor helping to settle security problems.<sup>66</sup>

## **B. NATO ENGAGEMENT**

The year 1994 is seen as a turning point in the development of the Baltic region security system because the three Baltic States decided to relate their security guarantees with projected membership into NATO. In fact, the three Baltic countries NATO considered as an adequate measure that would resolve the issue of security of the Baltic Sea region, since membership of the NATO provides the most important security

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64 In 30 April 1994 the presidents of Latvia and Russia signed an agreement under which the 10000 Russian troops remaining in Latvia were to withdraw. A handful of Russian service of 500-600 personnel was to remain to operate the Skrunda radar station on the Baltic coast until its closure some years later. The last Russian units officially left Latvia on 29 August 1994. Russia's staunch and vociferous opposition to Baltic membership in NATO has been immovable throughout the period.

65 William Drozdiak and Marc Fisher, G-7 Nations Set to Ease Russian Debt. Yeltsin Unlikely To Get Eight Seats, The Washington Post, 8.7.1992, p. A1

66 G. Vitkus, Changing Security Regime in the Baltic Sea Region, <http://www.nato.int/acad/fellow/99-01/Vitkus.pdf>. Accessed 12 November 2004.

guarantee – smooth socio-economic development of the states, restricting Russia's possibilities for directing these processes in a way favorable to Russia.<sup>67</sup>

Nevertheless, the possibility of NATO expansion to the Baltic States figured prominently in Russia's policy towards Latvia and other Baltic countries. Meanwhile, Russia adhered to a provision that the Baltic Sea region was secure enough – no state posed a military threat to any other state, therefore, NATO enlargement was an unnecessary and provocative step that had to be opposed. Russia even attempted direct influence on governments of the Baltic States so that they would change their attitude towards NATO membership. The most colorful example was Russia's proposal for provision of security guarantees to the Baltic States by entering into binding bilateral treaties or a multilateral "regional security and stability pact" (end of 1997).<sup>68</sup>

However, Baltic States dismissed the Russian offer of unilateral security guarantees and responded that "unilateral security guarantees do not correspond to the spirit of the new Europe and that these, as well as regional security pacts, have never been on the agenda of the Baltic states"<sup>69</sup> Furthermore, they stated that European security was indivisible and that security and stability of the region would be strengthened by the integration of the Baltic States into the European Union and NATO. Even Russian politicians and diplomats soon became convinced that no "tempting" with Russian security guarantees, or economic, or other means would change the attitude of the Baltic States' political elite. It should be mentioned that even after the withdrawal of the Russian army; Baltic-Russian relations did not substantially change or improve because neither party intended to change their totally opposite positions towards security policy.

Actually, it became obvious that this "regional deadlock" could only be ended by the influence of international institutions capable of conducting equal dialogue with Russia and the Baltic States. NATO became such institution. NATO's task was to deter

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<sup>67</sup> H. Binnendijk and J. Simon, Baltic Security and NATO Enlargement, Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University, Strategic Forum, Number 57, December 1995

<sup>68</sup> Russia Threatens Balts over NATO Expansion, The Baltic Independent, Vol 6, No 280, 8 - 14 September 1995, p. 2.

<sup>69</sup> Current Latvia, Information Bulletin, Latvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Riga, Wk 46, November 10-17

Russia and at the same time to reassure it and the Baltic states that their security would be enhanced. As a result, NATO launched the PfP, which became the most effective instrument for stabilizing the security situation in the whole of Eastern Europe. It was also of great importance that the “Partnership for Peace: Framework Document” clearly stated that "NATO will consult any active participant in the Partnership if the Partner perceives a direct threat to its territorial integrity, political independence, or security".<sup>70</sup>

By establishing PfP, NATO and Russia actually finalized the process of dismantling of the old security regime and meant for the formation of a new security situation in the all of Central and Eastern Europe. Moreover, NATO went even further in 1997 by developing a plan for drawing Russia closer to the Alliance and integrating it in the European security architecture. The Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation signed in Paris on 27 May 1997, confirmed once again that NATO and Russia did not consider each other as adversaries. While the Act contained no guarantees for Russia concerning restricting of NATO's enlargement, it was undoubtedly a new phenomenon in the security environment. Actually, this document demonstrated, for the first time, that there existed certain principles, norms, and rules that could be subscribed to even by the former Cold War antagonists.

Nevertheless, the assessment of NATO influence on Latvian-Russian relations considers another, perhaps the most vulnerable aspect, the Russian speaking minority issue, which is discussed in the next section.

### **C. MINORITY PROBLEM**

During Latvia's aspiration process to join NATO, Alliance members constantly emphasized that their intention was not to antagonize Russia, and that enlargement was not meant to be a confrontation.

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<sup>70</sup> Partnership for Peace: Invitation, NATO On-line Library, <http://www.nato.int/docu/comm/49-95/c940110a.htm>. Accessed 12 November 2004.

Thus Russia's opposition led many members to fear a possible confrontation with Russia because of the Baltic States, with their unresolved minority problems and border disputes.<sup>71</sup>

The reason for the conflict over this minority problem was the large number (about 30 %) and the legal status of the Russian-speaking population in Latvia.

The core of the minority's problem was formed throughout the post-second world war period when Latvia experienced repeated waves of russification, in particular, a massive influx of immigrants from outside its borders. Before the war, the Latvian share of the total population was 76 percent. At the end of the 1990s, ethnic Latvians made up 52 percent of the population. In fact, Latvians have still not recovered from the effects of the Second World War and communist rule. Besides, Russia still refuses, in principle, to recognize that the Baltic States were occupied and annexed against their will in 1940.

In sum, the main line of Russia's policy was an attempt to discredit the Baltic States in the eyes of the NATO states – as countries not suitable for membership in the Alliance. Russia insisted and still demands that the situation of the Russian-speaking population in Latvia be improved, but at the same time indicates its unwillingness, or even inability to integrate the Russian community into its own society. This raises doubts over the country's democratic nature and respect for minority rights.<sup>72</sup> This issue also serves as a “good reason” for Russia's refusing to finally settle the issue of state borders with Latvia.

Nevertheless, over the past decade the Baltic States have worked closely with the OSCE and EU to bring their citizenship and electoral laws into conformity with OSCE and EU norms and procedures. Numerous delegations of foreign inspectors and observer missions have not found any serious violations of human rights in the Latvian laws on citizenship and naturalization. Moreover, both organizations have certified that the laws

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<sup>71</sup> David Gompert and Stephen Larrabee, *America and Europe: A Partnership for a New Europe*, Cambridge, 1996, pp 176 - 177

<sup>72</sup> For instance, at the Helsinki summit in March 1997, President Yeltsin tried to get a private “gentleman agreement” with President Clinton that would not be made public to admit the Baltic States into the Alliance. However, President Clinton flatly refused to make such a commitment.

of the all three Baltic States fully conform to OSCE and EU norms. In fact, this obviously confirms that Russia's accusation of human rights abuse in Latvia had nothing to do with Latvia's aspiration to join NATO. The analysis of Russian policy towards NATO enlargement suggests that:

Russia remains fundamentally incapable of playing a constructive role in this process. Russian policies for Europe are incoherent and attached to models of European security that have little or no relevance to other states or that actually alarm them. Russia still disdains the small states, thinking them to be of no consequence, proposes infeasible and objectionable schemes of pan- European collective security that do not bind it but would bind NATO, and at the same time pursues unilateralist spheres of influence policies in the Commonwealth of Independent States. Russian policy is also frankly and openly revisionist, demanding border revisions and refusing to sign formal border treaties to recognize the post- 1989 changes in Central and Eastern Europe.<sup>73</sup>

However, after 2000, the situation started to improve. The reasons for this improvement were both the President's reelection in Russia and the September 11<sup>th</sup> tragedy in the US. Russia's support for the war on terrorism and the open support of President Putin for closer relations with NATO allayed concerns among Allies over a possible negative Russian reaction, particularly to membership for the Baltic States.<sup>74</sup>

#### **D. NATO'S PRAGUE SUMMIT**

When President Vladimir Putin took office in 2000, it was hard to imagine that Russia would remain quiet if and when the Baltic States were accepted into NATO. However, President Putin paved the way for more constructive cooperation. While opposing NATO enlargement in principle, he seemed to recognize that Russia had over-reacted to the first round of enlargement and appeared intent on not allowing the Baltic issue to disrupt his effort to deepen cooperation with NATO.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Stephen J. Blank, NATO Enlargement and the Baltic States: What can the Great Powers do?, [www.carlisle.army.mil/ssi/pdf/00140.pdf](http://www.carlisle.army.mil/ssi/pdf/00140.pdf). Accessed 12 November 2004.

<sup>74</sup> Robust" Enlargement at the Prague Summit, LMI Logistics Management Institute, May 2002, [www.lmi.org](http://www.lmi.org). Accessed 12 November 2004.

<sup>75</sup> As a result, in May 2000 the NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council (PJC) resumed its work, which was ceased in protest over NATO's air campaign against Serbia, and further on gradually expanded its agenda. Later it was followed by the opening of NATO's information office in Moscow in February 2001.

Nevertheless, it became clear at the beginning of 2002 that the issue of NATO's enlargement to the Baltic Sea region had been in substance resolved. The Alliance went even further in order to finalize the rapprochement between Russia and NATO. An agreement on closer cooperation between NATO and Russia was signed in Reykjavik in 2002.<sup>76</sup>

The momentum for NATO membership for all three Baltic States began in 2001. President George W. Bush supported NATO enlargement to a greater extent than his predecessor and had been less anxious over Russian objections. In June 2001 he outlined his pro-enlargement views in Warsaw and stressed that membership was open to any country that met the NATO criteria. In addition, the closer US-Russian cooperation on terrorism in the aftermath of the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks also helped to defuse the impact of the Baltic issue on NATO-Russian relations.

When the decision to admit seven new members was announced in the NATO's Prague Summit in November 2002, the Russian reaction was reserved and calm as never before. In fact, there was little or no talk at all in the media regarding threats resulting from the enlargement. Furthermore, Putin even took a step toward acknowledging the inevitability of enlargement by expressing the view that Russia might itself want to join NATO, as an alternative to his preferred option of seeing NATO disappear. However, as it appeared later, it was not an accident but a manifestation of first changes in Russian foreign policy.<sup>77</sup>

Nevertheless, over the past decade the issue of NATO enlargement has been a crucial one in Latvian-Russian relations. Russia has always insisted that NATO enlargement to the Baltic States would be unacceptable, since NATO is a block undermining Russia's national security. Today, when Russia and the US are coming closer to each other in their rhetoric, this argument is losing its viability.

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<sup>76</sup> The document entitled "NATO-Russia Relations: A New Quality" formally establishing the NATO-Russia Council was signed on 28 May 2002 in Rome during the NATO-Russia summit meeting.

<sup>77</sup> Philip H. Gordon and James B. Steinberg, NATO Enlargement: Moving Forward; Expanding the Alliance and Completing Europe's Integration, [www.brook.edu/comm/policybriefs/pb90.htm](http://www.brook.edu/comm/policybriefs/pb90.htm) - 89k



Russia cannot argue anymore that Latvia and other Baltic States would threaten Russian national security by their integration into NATO, since the NATO is an organization comprised of Russia's partners.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> K.Plātere, Prospects of the relations between Latvia and Russia, Tartu University Library, [www.ut.ee](http://www.ut.ee) Accessed 12 November 2004.

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## **VI. CONCLUSIONS**

After the collapse of the Soviet Union and with the regaining of independence at the beginning of the nineties, all new Eastern European democracies were deeply concerned with the development of national security. Facing new political and economic instabilities and security risks, Latvia, like other former Warsaw Pact countries, started to seek guarantees and insurance for its security. Since Latvia lost its independence (being a neutral state) in 1939, it believed that these guarantees could be received only in an alliance with a system of collective defense. NATO, by surviving the Cold War rivalries, turned out to be the security and defense framework for the entire Europe. In fact, common values, democracy and a striving for welfare were the factors that dictated Latvia's orientation toward Western democracies. Moreover, the possibility of military threat from the East made NATO become the primary goal of Latvian security policy.

For achieving this important objective, Latvia started the process of implementing NATO's requirements. Through an evolutionary process, both NATO and Latvia adapted their institutions, structures and norms for better cooperation and full interoperability. In view of future NATO membership a great number of changes were made in numerous fields, from external relations to legislation and build up of national armed forces from scratch.

On March 29 2004, Latvia, together with six other countries (Bulgaria, Estonia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia) became a full-fledged member of NATO. When NATO was founded in 1949, the people of the aforementioned nations were captives to an empire that tenaciously struggled for independence. In fact, the NATO Alliance rose out of the ruins of this post-war Europe and it united together for a common purpose, those nations, which a very few years before actually have been enemies. Moreover, it united them under values of individual freedom, the rule of law, and democracy. Obviously, this is what sustained the strength of NATO and destined it to become the most successful military alliance in history.

To answer questions concerning NATO influence on the Latvian security environment in advance of its full-fledged membership, this thesis examined Latvia's arguments for joining the Alliance, the building blocks and mechanisms by which NATO extended its institutional and normative influence, and how these contributed to the build up Latvian National Armed Forces and resolution of the security dilemma in the Baltic Sea region.

After uniting its former antagonists into NACC, then into EAPC and PfP, NATO managed to find a peculiar form of institutionalization of relations with Russia— a Permanent Joint Council, which was convened as a result of NATO's decision to start enlarging the Alliance by admitting Poland, Czech Republic, and Hungary. Thus, the stabilizing role of NATO was strengthening and was increasingly present in the region. However, one must state that even this role was not an adequate factor that could accomplish final normalization of Baltic-Russian relations. Therefore, the security regime that existed in the Baltic Sea region almost up to 2002 could be characterized as a preserved situation of uncertainty, the resolution of which was constantly postponed for the future.

From the early 1990s, NATO proved to be the organization able to change its institutions according to current political circumstances. The early objectives of NACC, PfP, and later MAP challenges put pressure on the whole spectrum of Latvian society, from ordinary citizens to political leaders. Full participation in PfP/PARP was essential because it allowed Latvia to develop interoperability with NATO forces and to prepare its force structures and capabilities for NATO membership.

Nevertheless, for Latvia, membership in NATO meant commitment to the basic principles of the North Atlantic Treaty, democracy, rule of law, political and economic stability, as well as the development of the Latvian National Armed Forces, according to NATO standards.

Latvia's decision to meet the challenges associated with gaining membership in NATO and the EU brought first fruits with the withdrawal of Russian troops from Latvia in 1994. By this year, all three Baltic States had been gradually absorbed into various

international and regional arrangements for political, economic and security cooperation. The preparations for accession into NATO and the EU also enhanced closer security and defense cooperation between Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania. In this way, they had been able to optimize their resources and capabilities and avoid costly and pointless duplication.

The decisions of the Copenhagen EU and Prague NATO Summits to extend an invitation to Latvia and the other candidate countries to begin NATO and EU accession talks not only fulfilled their national goals, but also created new consequences and responsibilities. Actually, this was a day that Latvia and her fellow aspirant countries had been waiting for a very long time. For Latvia and her neighbors, the decision in Prague represented a vindication of the principles of international justice. It signified an end to the last vestiges of the Second World War, which began with the signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact in 1939 and which resulted in the immoral division of Europe into outdated "spheres of influence."

Under the guidance of NATO, Latvia learned to share responsibilities and costs. A defense budget totaling 2% of the annual GDP is allocated at present and will remain at this level until 2008. Latvia is also considering its own contribution to the NATO Response Force. Along with an infantry battalion, specifically trained for peace operations, Latvia is developing specialized units of military medics, divers, explosive ordnance disposal units, and military police that could effectively fill gaps in NATO's collective capabilities. Additionally, a decision has been made to develop capabilities in nuclear, biological, and chemical defense, mine clearance operations, and special operations.

Having successfully transformed its own country into a free market democracy, Latvia aims at passing on the reform experience to the post communist countries that desire to implement similar transformation. Latvia's experts cooperate with the Government of Moldova on the issue of language training, passing on the experience acquired through the National Program for the Latvian Language Training. Latvia has also consulted Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan on running of state administration.

The admission of Central European nations into NATO has already helped consolidate democracy and the rule of law in these countries, in particular, by reforming civil-military relations. Moreover, the very aspiration of Alliance membership has contributed to building stability in Southeastern Europe and the Baltics, since the Alliance insists that candidate countries resolve outstanding border and minority issues before they are able to join. Indirectly, but equally importantly, NATO enlargement provides a form of political insurance for foreign capital investment in the new member countries, assisting in economic development.

Within NATO, each member country takes on the task of contributing to the development of peaceful and friendly international relations. NATO encourages cooperation between member countries by attempting to eliminate the conflict that may exist in international economic policies. While NATO was originally created to provide security simply for its members, it has actually played a major role in extending stability and security throughout all of Europe. NATO has done this by forming ties with non-NATO countries in order to decrease mistrust and limit the possible severity of misunderstandings. Programs like EAPC and PfP, as well as the NATO Science Programme are programs that NATO engages in with other non-member countries to help strengthen diplomatic ties.

In summary, the findings of this thesis shows that NATO's involvement with Latvia has had multiple positive effects, including increased security, transformation of the armed forces, and creation of a new framework in Latvian-Russian relations. It is obvious that through NATO impact, Latvia has developed into a significant factor of stability and security in the Baltic Sea region. This thesis shows that NATO membership was and continues to be the best option to ensure Latvia's Statehood. NATO membership also seems to be a significant factor influencing Latvian-Russian relations. However, whether it will be a decisive one in developing lasting improvements or at least normalized relations – this is a question for further research and the future.

Nevertheless, as NATO grows, the better it will be able to handle new security challenges including weapons proliferation, ethnic conflict, and terrorism. Russia's integration with NATO could be the next long-term project for the Alliance. A Russia

living in harmony with its European neighbors will be the ultimate achievement of enlightened Western European policies. For now, the prime goal should be to use NATO-Russia cooperation in addressing new security threats, such as international terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and to help dismantle the still formidable surviving Cold-War infrastructure.

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